

Sharing Our Marianist Stories Ep. 12 Transcript

Embracing Marianist Life and Service (with Maureen O'Rourke, Patti Gehred, and Gabby Bibeau)

00:00 - Maureen O'Rourke

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00:54 - Patti Gehred

Welcome to *Sharing Our Marianist Stories*. I'm Patti Gehred.

00:58 - Gabby Bibeau

And I'm Sr. Gabby Bibeau. So, today's podcast is an interview with Maureen O'Rourke. And for those of you who don't know, Maureen O'Rourke is currently the Director of the PULSE Marianist volunteer program that's in Dayton. I recorded this interview with her October 15th this year. Patti, I sent you a rough cut of our interview. What were your thoughts listening to it?

01:29 - Patti Gehred

Well, I'm always so impressed with Maureen. She's a visionary and you can see that and hear that from all the work she's done. She's always looking forward from a place of compassion. She has such a deep connection to Dayton as well as the Marianists, so you hear that she volunteers within her community. She just creates family wherever she goes.

01:55 - Gabby Bibeau

I really enjoyed talking to her more about her Marianist story. I was really touched and am really touched by her commitment. And I think that it shows in the work that she's done and her dedication to her neighborhood. And one of the things that I really liked that she says is about - especially for someone who her professional career has been in the Marianist world - "What does it mean to be Marianist when it's not on your name tag?" You know, when you're just in your neighborhood, in your family, what does that mean? How do you live that commitment? And I thought that was a really good insight, whether we work in a Marianist institution or not, how do we live that commitment day-to-day?

02:46 - Patti Gehred

And I like when she mentioned “Marianist Giants,” that she recognizes the gifts that other people bring to the Marianist world and learns from that. And I think that's a lesson for all of us to look to others, to help us grow ourselves. And so, she's got a knack for recognizing that in others and learning from it. So, can you tell me a little bit more about what the PULSE program is?

03:15 - Gabby Bibeau

Maureen talks a little bit about it in our interview coming up. She'll give more details, but the PULSE program is a yearlong volunteer program for post college young adults - many of them went to a Marianist High School or Marianist University, but not necessarily - and they commit to a year of living in community, working in a service not-for-profit agency, living in the inner city of Dayton, and just sharing life with their neighbors in the neighborhood. And throughout that year they also have a formation program that they do in the Marianist charism, Marianist leadership, Marianist social justice. So, there's that formative aspect, that faith-based and communal aspect, too. So, I'm excited to see where the program goes looking into the future. Well, we hope that you enjoy listening to this interview with Maureen O'Rourke, so here it is.

04:25 - Maureen O'Rourke

My name is Maureen O'Rourke, and I work with the Marianist PULSE program. So, I serve the Marianist Province of the US as the coordinator of the program since 2015. I first met the Marianists at Chaminade Julianne High School. So, that was a different time. I think in Marianists institutions, it was much more of the osmosis time. I knew we were a Marianist school, but there wasn't a lot of conversation or formation around what that meant. Was it lived? Absolutely, and it made my experience in high school for certain. It was my experience at CJ and the involvement I had there that really led to some amazing scholarships to attend the University of Dayton.

05:10 - Maureen O'Rourke

And it was at UD that really it all kind of started to make sense. So, a lot of invitations opened up to serve on the Rector's council when I was a first-year student. And then, soon after that attending the Marianist University meetings at Chaminade University, St. Mary's [University], and UD. And so, that broadened my experiences of both meeting the Marianists, but also learning more about [what] the charism is. And I was just with this really amazing group of young people who are dear friends now, near and far. And because of the journey, we walked through many different opportunities here, we discerned becoming a Lay Community together. So, we were then the Branches Community, so the first community of UD students who went through a Lay formation process, and that was super impactful. This really is my heart and my commitment and my identity. It's who I am.

06:12 – Gabby Bibeau

If I'm not mistaken, all of your jobs since graduating have been with the Marianists. How do you see that as an extension of your commitment? Does that help you feel like you're able to live the charism?

06:29 - Maureen O'Rourke

Sure. So, my professional career has been in the Marianist world. So, after graduating, I took on three-part time positions with the Marianists, which was crazy. And after about a year and a half of doing that, I needed to focus. I wanted one job, so I started work at the University of Dayton in the Rector's office. I did fax, staff formation and worked with a number of student Marianist new student programs and did that for 10 years. Stepped into the opportunity in 2015 to work with the PULSE program to help put some flesh to the skeleton that have been developed. And I definitely think that my personal commitment nourishes my work in walking with young adults.

07:12 - Maureen O'Rourke

I think for me, what's always been a really cool opportunity has been to be a Lay Marianist elsewhere. And so, I've often spoken to that being my commitment to my neighborhood. My neighborhood has always been where I live the charism. And people don't always know that's what I'm doing or why I do it or how I do, but I think they know it's a little different. And so, that's been a real gift to me to be a Marianist in places where it's not on my name tag, and that's exciting, and it feels like that's what we're called to do. We can have these personal commitments and these professional commitments, but how does the world experience us a little bit differently? And how do we impact the world because the charism calls us to it?

08:02 - Gabby Bibeau

You mentioned PULSE. Could you tell us what that is?

08:09 - Maureen O'Rourke

So, Marianist PULSE stands for Partners in Urban Leadership, Service, and Education. PULSE was dreamt up a number of years back by three vowed religious who saw lots of young people who were really catching the charism and wanting to commit to the charism and enliven it. And so, they thought as young people graduate university, they're entering into these year of service programs, and they're really desiring to be formed in the Marianist charism, particularly. And at that point we really had nothing officially to offer them. So, a proposal was put together, and then I was hired in 2015 and given a year to listen and to create and to collaborate. So, we welcomed our first cohort in the fall of 2016.

09:03 - Maureen O'Rourke

So, PULSE is a yearlong commitment. It's actually 11 months. In this experience, we ask young adults to commit to a year of service and solidarity and living intentionally in community. And

what's important is what makes us unique, and the unique piece to us is this servant leadership formation through the lens of the charism. The program itself is quite the journey, I think, for young adults. They volunteer in a variety of different issue areas, whether that's education and tutoring or removing barriers to education. And that's a big piece of our roles in educational institutions. We also work in response to the opioid epidemic, food deserts, food justice, food access, environmental justice, education and community outreach. We run the variety of concerns in our world, in our community, and Dayton is really where we offer this program. But the hope and the prayer is that they take what is formed in them here home or to wherever's next.

10:13 - Gabby Bibeau

One of the things that I think is so valuable about the PULSE program is this connection between the Marianist charism and justice. How would you articulate what is a Marianist approach to social justice?

10:29 - Maureen O'Rourke

So, when I think about justice in the Marianist tradition, oftentimes I think about the way in which we organize and community organize. So, I feel like I've learned a lot, both in the United States and abroad through the Marianists in how we enter into a community and listen - our approach to justice versus listening - and to be mindful of our collective voice. So, I think we have more of an opportunity than we ever realize in being a collective voice, both locally and nationally and globally. And so, I think that's where we are now. I think that's where the Marianists are trying to figure out what's our shared impact. And a great example [of] that is what we're seeing, I think, in the Dayton area right now. The Dayton Marianist Family Council, some PULSE alumni who are working towards these initiatives of how do we partner with nonprofits, partner with church communities, with other communities, and help align some services and some support and even look at some policy change that can impact our neighbors? Yeah, so I think that probably speaks to me most, of like what am I seeing right now. And I'm grateful to see some PULSE alums really taking the lead in some of those ways, too.

11:53 - Gabby Bibeau

You've talked about your sort of professional life and different jobs that you've had since graduating and just sort of growing as a Marianist. Who have been some really influential Marianists for you, who really modeled the Marianists charism and have been just a big influence on you? Could you talk about that a little bit?

12:19 - Maureen O'Rourke

For me, there are so many Marianists Giants, and this concept of standing on the shoulders of giants. Gosh, so I think of Bro. Skip Matthews year after year bringing students to Los Angeles and literally walking with Skip on Skid Row, and he was known by name. And I come to this thought over and over again in life about how important it is to be named, to be known by name.

And there's this quote about, you know, "You tell me you love the poor. Tell me their names." And I think of Skip. And I'm grateful for what that's really inspired me in my own personal commitment to service and to walking with those in the community of Dayton. Yeah, so I think of Skip a lot. Bro. Charlie Wanda and I were really close. Oh, and I miss him. Gosh, I think Charlie just taught me beauty and patience and presence. What a good guy! I think a lot about Fr. Paul Marshall and Fr. Jim Fitz and Bro. Ray Fitz. I'm grateful to work with Bro. Ray quite a bit and learn from him every day. I mean, the generous heart in which he lives each day and his endless passion.

13:54 - Maureen O'Rourke

Sr. Mary Louise Foley comes to mind, too. Back when I worked at the university, I was able to learn a lot from Mary Louise, particularly when she was walking with young women, and especially those who are pregnant. And what a difficult journey I think that was for them. And I had several times during my tenure at UD where I was graced by walking with her and a student, and really trusting those students to her and knowing there was no one better that they could be with. So, I think her commitment to those women was really her commitment to Mary.

14:38 - Maureen O'Rourke

Yeah. One of the biggest moments of stepping into an adult faith, really for me, was in loss. So, losing my dad in 2012 was immense. He was by far my best friend. But I remember when he passed, the celebrations of his life were supported just immensely by the Marianist Family, vowed and lay, who were there with us, praying for us and with us. I remember a couple of days after when I first returned to work trying to get resettled into what life would look like and felt like and living with loss. - You know, what that meant. - And I got this phone call from Sr. Mary Louise Foley. We knew each other well, and she was always a source of strength and peace for me. Gosh, peace is kind of all of who she is! But Mary Louise called, and she said, "Maureen, I know this is probably really hard for you." And I remember her saying, "I know you don't sense it now, and I know things are difficult, but I'll pray for you and for the times that you're aware of His love for you."

16:00 - Maureen O'Rourke

I didn't really know what that meant then, right? Like, I was too busy in the process of grief and really walking in that pain. But that wisdom from her came to me time and time again of this invitation to understand even what the Community of Saints is. And so, Sr. Mary Louise really calling to mind in me "bring your heart back to prayer. Be mindful. Be open." And just as God's presence and the Spirit moves around me that I can be attentive to this Community of Saints. So, I remember her wisdom, and I remember just feeling carried. Just so many Marianist Saints, so many Marianist Saints, and so many more coming. And that's what's exciting to me, too.

16:52 - Gabby Bibeau

The reason I ask this question is because in every vocation, there are people who really kind of accompany you on the way, and that's really special. And I think it's special to be somebody like you who does that for other people, too, accompanies them on the journey. So, I'm going to back up a little bit. I would like to talk about Marianist Family. You got married recently. Could you maybe say a little bit about how, as you're kind of building your own family, how the Marianist Family kind of is part of that or plays a role in that?

17:40 - Maureen O'Rourke

In the moments when my Lay Community - our community is made-up of vowed and lay religious. There are also thirteen children between the ages of one month and eight years old. And together, we are this beautiful, unique, vibrant experience of the Church. And I think that's an experience I have in my community, but also an experience I have in the broader Marianist Family. And so, for me, it's like yeah, we are this one big Family, and we should be. And there are times where we can be Family when others might not think it natural. And for me, I want it to be natural.

18:23 - Maureen O'Rourke

I think back to when Brad and I got married. In trying to kind of get everything lined up, I was trying to figure out where do I put my wedding dress on. Like, things that I guess maybe other brides think of more often than I did. So, I happened to mention to Sr. Laura [Leming] and Sr. Nicole [Trahan] that I needed to find a space close to the Chapel where I could get dressed. And they both looked at me and said, "Well, why aren't you doing it here?" And *here* being their community home. And I thought, "Because it's your house." And they said, "No, we want you to do this here." And what a gift it was for us, and I think the Sisters would agree.

19:08 - Gabby Bibeau

Yes, we do.

19:10 - Maureen O'Rourke

Yeah, it was a beautiful gift. There was so much joy, I think, in the Sisters hosting, but also in my family and in my friends, and some of my friends who aren't connected to the Marianist world. So, Brad's mom, particularly time and time again, the first mention was, "Maureen, I love your Marianist Sisters." And I was like, "Gosh darn, me too! I do too!" To be so embraced by that love and that sense of these women are my family, too.

19:43 - Maureen O'Rourke

Brad and I have a volunteer commitment. So, every Tuesday night we serve meals in my old neighborhood community and to have dinner with our neighbors. And since he and I have been doing that together - So, I've been doing it for a number of years, he joined me now for almost

two years, and the Novitiate Brothers have also joined about twice a month for the last two years. And that's been amazing to serve together, but also for Brad to develop all these relationships. But I think of how much he knows and loves those Brothers. And as our family grows and we become family, for him to be embraced so beautifully by my Marianist Family has been really wonderful. And I'm excited to see that grow. And I feel like we're carried in prayer as we grow, too.

20:39 - Gabby Bibeau

Thanks for listening to this episode of *Sharing Our Marianist Stories*.

20:43- Patti Gehred

If you want more information about the PULSE program, check out the www.marianists.com/pulse web page to get more information.

20:54 - Gabby Bibeau

And if you want more information about all things NACMS, you can always go to our website at www.nacms.org. That's www.nacms.org.